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ABSTRACT

Total farm population has continued to decrease; the April 1968 average of 10,454,000 persons reflected an estimated drop of 421,000 since April 1967. The regional distribution remained the same, however, with the largest concentration in the South, about 45 percent, while the North Central Region ranked second with 39 percent. During 1967-1968, 749,000 persons moved off farms or lived on places that were removed from the farm category, and 268,000 persons entered the farm population. The excess of births over deaths amounted to 60,000. This was the smallest absolute change since the mid-1950's. For the 1950-55 period, the net outflow from farms averaged 1.1 million persons annually, and from 1960-65, the annual average was 794,000 persons. Four tables included in the report provide regional data on the farm population. (BC)

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THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARM POPULATION - ESTIMATES FOR 1968

Human Resources Branch
Economic Development Division
Economic Research Service

The number of persons living on farms in rural areas of the United States averaged 10,454,000 in the 12-month period centered on April 1968 (table 1). 1/ The estimated decrease of 421,000 since April 1967 represents a further continuation of the long-term downward trend in the farm population. The annual farm population survey of the Economic Research Service shows a decline in the number of farm residents in all major geographic regions and divisions of the country. 2/

The decline of approximately 5 million in the number of farm residents since 1960 has had no major effect on the regional distribution of farm people. Within the Nation, the South, with 45 percent of all farm residents, still has the largest farm population. The North Central Region ranks second with 39 percent, while the West and Northeast have less than 10 percent each.

The most important change has been a gradual decrease in the proportion of farm people who live in the four contiguous geographic divisions in the interior and Deep South of the Nation. These four—East South Central, West South Central, West North Central, and Mountain Divisions—had 51.2 percent of the total farm population in 1960, compared with 49.1 percent in 1968. On the other hand, the Middle Atlantic, South Atlantic, and East North Central Divisions have had slower rates of farm population loss than has the Nation as a whole.

Between April 1967 and April 1968, an estimated 749,000 farm people of all ages either moved away from farms or lived on places that were removed from the farm category during the year because agricultural operations ceased. During this same period, 268,000 persons entered the farm population either by migrating to farms or living on places where agricultural operations began during the year. Consequently, for 1967-68, the net loss to the farm population through migration and reclassification of residence was 481,000 (table 2). This change is the smallest absolute amount of loss recorded for a single year since the mid-1950's.

For 1967-68 the excess of births over deaths among farm people amounted to 60,000. The crude birth rate in the farm population (births per 1,000 total farm population) has been declining steadily and is apparently now somewhat below that of the nonfarm population. This decline is thought to have resulted from the heavy outmovement of young adults from farms and the consequent relative shortage of farm families of childbearing age.

Estimated farm population changes from one year to another fluctuate in part from sampling variation; therefore, averages for a period of years are deemed more reliable. The average net annual number of persons leaving the farm population through outmigration and cessation of farming has declined in each 5-year period since the beginning of the 1950 decade (fig. 1). During 1950-55 (the last peak period of net outmigration), the net outflow from farms averaged 1.1 million persons annually. The annual average for 1960-65, the latest 5-year period available, was down to 794,000 persons (table 3).

1/ The figure is an annual average computed by using quarterly data for the year centered on the April date for which the estimate is prepared.

2/ States in geographic regions and divisions are listed at bottom of table 1.

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Table 1.--Farm population for the United States, regions, and divisions, 1968 and 1960 1/

Area	Number		Percentage distribution		Percentage change, 1960-68
	1968 2/	1960	1968 2/	1960	
	Thou.	Thou.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
United States	10,454	15,635	100.0	100.0	-33.1
Regions:					
Northeast	758	1,119	7.2	7.2	-32.3
North Central	4,048	5,836	38.8	37.3	-30.6
South	4,662	7,160	44.5	45.8	-34.9
West	986	1,520	9.5	9.7	-35.1
Divisions:					
New England	127	232	1.2	1.5	-45.3
Middle Atlantic	631	887	6.0	5.7	-28.9
East North Central	2,066	2,821	19.8	18.0	-26.8
West North Central	1,983	3,015	19.0	19.3	-34.2
South Atlantic	1,940	2,838	18.5	18.2	-31.6
East South Central	1,599	2,494	15.3	15.9	-35.9
West South Central	1,123	1,828	10.7	11.7	-38.6
Mountain	425	678	4.1	4.3	-37.3
Pacific	561	842	5.4	5.4	-33.4

1/ Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand without being adjusted to group totals. 2/ Similar estimates for States are not available.

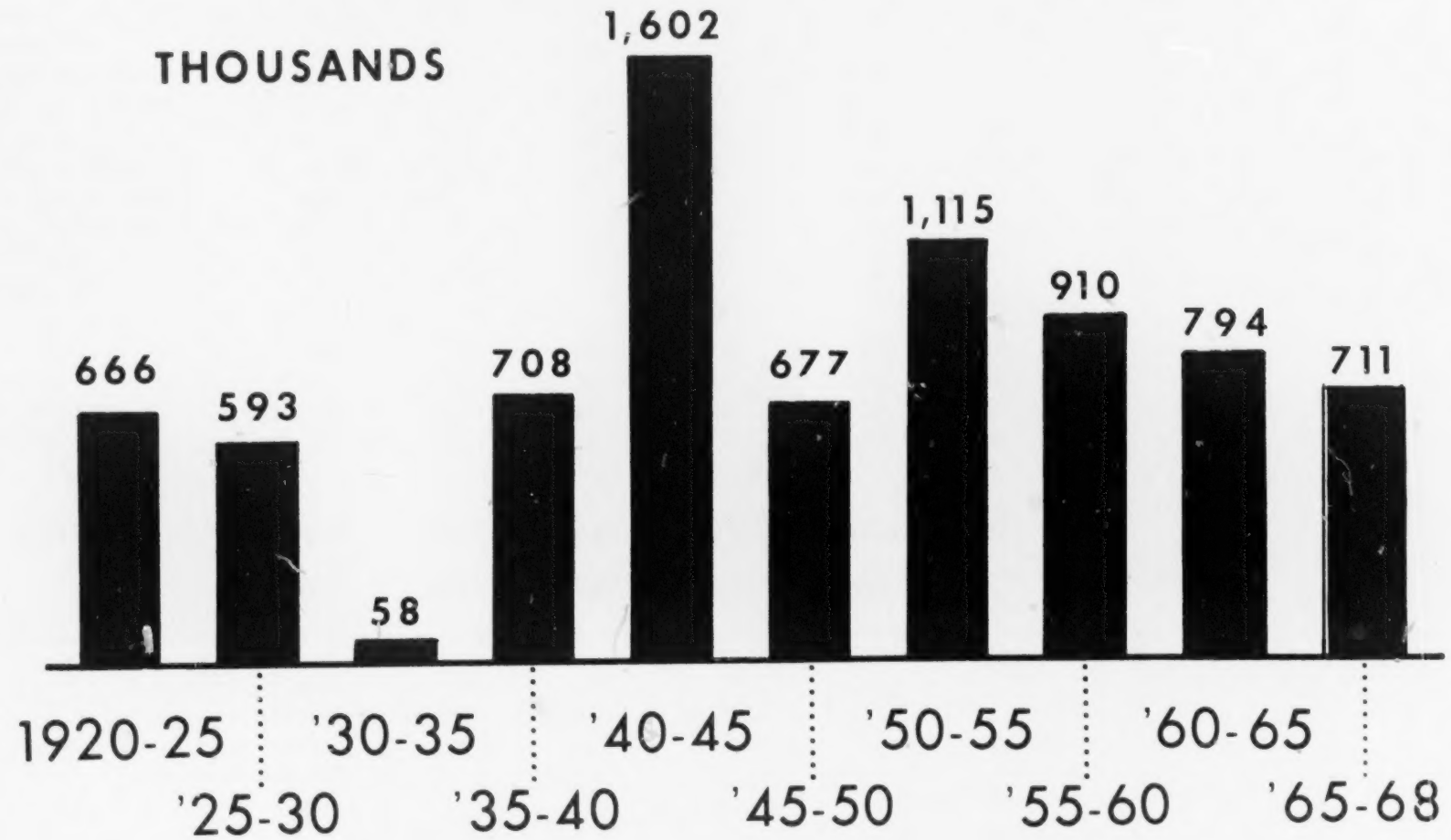
States in the geographic areas are: NORTHEAST--New England: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut; Middle Atlantic: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania. NORTH CENTRAL--East North Central: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin; West North Central: Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas. SOUTH--South Atlantic: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida; East South Central: Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi; West South Central: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas. WEST--Mountain: Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada; Pacific: Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Table 2.--Farm population and components of farm population change for the United States, regions, and divisions, April 1967-68 1/

Area	Farm population, April 1968	Natural increase			Change through migration and reclassification of residence 2/					Farm population, April 1967
		Total	Births	Deaths	Net change	Between farms and nonfarm areas or the Armed Forces			Farm to farm 3/	
						Net	To farms	From farms		
	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.
United States	10,454	60	163	-103	-481	-481	268	-749	0	10,875
Regions: 4/										
Northeast	758	4	12	-8	-33	-31	22	-53	-2	787
North Central	4,048	22	62	-40	-172	-176	106	-282	4	4,198
South	4,662	27	72	-46	-222	-216	103	-320	-5	4,857
West	986	7	16	-9	-55	-58	36	-93	3	1,033
Divisions: 4/										
New England	127	5/	2	-2	-8	-8	5	-13	5/	135
Middle Atlantic	631	4	11	-7	-25	-24	17	-41	-2	652
East North Central	2,066	10	30	-20	-77	-81	57	-138	4	2,132
West North Central	1,983	12	32	-20	-95	-95	49	-144	5/	2,065
South Atlantic	1,940	12	31	-19	-75	-76	33	-109	1	2,003
East South Central	1,599	8	24	-16	-76	-73	35	-108	-3	1,666
West South Central	1,123	6	17	-11	-71	-68	35	-103	-3	1,188
Mountain	425	4	8	-4	-25	-25	15	-40	1	446
Pacific	561	3	9	-5	-30	-32	21	-53	2	588

1/ Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand without being adjusted to group totals. 2/ Includes persons who did not move but who were in or out of the farm population because agricultural operations on the places where they were living either ceased or were begun. 3/ Net change in farm population of regions or divisions due to farm-to-farm movement. 4/ Similar estimates for States are not available. For States included in each region and division, see table 1. 5/ Less than 500 people.

AVERAGE ANNUAL NET OUTMIGRATION* FROM THE FARM POPULATION



*NET CHANGE THROUGH MIGRATION AND RECLASSIFICATION OF RESIDENCE FROM FARM TO NONFARM.

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Figure 1

Table 3.--Annual averages of components of farm population change and rate of net migration for the United States, regions, and divisions, April 1960-65 1/

Area	Natural increase			Change through migration and reclassification of residence 2/					Annual rate of net migration 4/
	Total	Births	Deaths	Net change	Between farms and nonfarm areas or the Armed Forces			Farm to farm 3/	
					Net	To farms	From farms		
	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Pct.
United States	139	272	-133	-794	-794	301	-1,095	0	-5.7
Regions: 5/									
Northeast	9	20	-11	-56	-59	25	-83	3	-5.6
North Central	52	102	-50	-283	-284	99	-383	1	-5.4
South	64	124	-60	-371	-360	132	-492	-12	-5.8
West	15	27	-12	-84	-91	45	-137	8	-6.3
Divisions: 5/									
New England	1	4	-2	-16	-17	7	-24	1	-8.1
Middle Atlantic	7	16	-9	-40	-41	18	-59	1	-5.0
East North Central	23	47	-25	-118	-119	48	-167	1	-4.6
West North Central	29	55	-26	-165	-165	51	-216	6/	-6.2
South Atlantic	27	51	-24	-145	-133	46	-179	-12	-5.7
East South Central	21	43	-22	-121	-115	43	-158	-5	-5.4
West South Central	16	30	-14	-106	-111	43	-154	5	-6.7
Mountain	8	13	-5	-42	-44	20	-64	3	-7.1
Pacific	7	14	-7	-42	-47	25	-73	5	-5.6

1/, 2/, and 3/ Same as table 2. 4/ Based on annual average net change in population through migration per 100 persons in the average April farm population for the period indicated. 5/ Similar estimates for States are not available. For States included in each region and division, see table 1. 6/ Less than 500 people.

For 1965-68, the average net outmigration was 711,000 persons annually (table 4). The net outmovement in this period resulted from an average annual gross gain of 272,000 and loss of 983,000 persons. Indications are that the downward trend in the net number of persons leaving the farm population will continue. A decline in the net average number of persons leaving farms does not necessarily reflect a decrease in the proportion of farm people who become nonfarm residents either through actual migration or reclassification. Generally, the net outmovement from farms has dropped more because of the diminished size of the farm population base than from any decline in the percentage rate of outmovement. The rate of net outmigration from farms has not decreased along with absolute net outmigration. For 1965-68, when absolute net outmigration averaged lower than in many years, the average rate of net outmovement was 6.3 percent. In comparison, during the peak net outmovement of 1950-55, the rate was 5.4 percent.

Among the geographic divisions of the country, the most striking change in the annual rate of net outmigration was the substantial increase during 1965-68 over 1960-65 for the East South Central Division. The annual rate of net outmigration for this division averaged 8.0 percent during 1965-68, compared with 5.4 percent for 1960-65. Only in this division did absolute net outmigration average higher during 1965-68 than during 1960-65. Increases also occurred in the net outmigration rates for the West South Central and Pacific Divisions. However, in these divisions, the absolute migration followed the national pattern by declining.

Definitions.--The estimates presented in this report relate to the rural civilian population living on farms, regardless of occupation. According to the definition adopted for the 1960 Census of Population, farm population consists of persons residing on places of 10 acres or more from which at least $50 worth of farm products were sold in the preceding year, and on places of less than 10 acres from which at least $250 worth of products were sold. Persons living on what might be considered farmland are classed as nonfarm if they rent for cash a house and yard only. Likewise, persons in institutions, summer camps, motels, and tourist camps located in the open country are also classed as nonfarm. Unmarried persons attending college away from home, and whose usual place of residence is a farm, are treated as farm residents in the surveys, although this procedure is different from that used in the decennial census.

Sources and limitations.--Annual estimates of the number of people living on farms in the United States as a whole are obtained from the Current Population Survey of the Bureau of the Census. As these estimates are based on sample data, they are subject to sampling variability. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate of the total 1968 farm population from the sample would differ from a complete census by less than 143,000. The chances are about 95 out of 100 that the difference would be no more than 285,000 and about 99 out of 100 that it would be no more than 366,000.

Data for geographic areas and for components of farm population change are based on a mail-questionnaire survey conducted for the Economic Research Service by the Statistical Reporting Service. This survey was conducted in every State except Hawaii. Usable information was obtained from 22,000 respondents in 1968, reporting on 92,000 farms. 3/ Area estimates are tied to benchmark figures for decennial census years and adjusted to conform to the total farm population estimate obtained annually by the Bureau of the Census.

The reliability of any geographic area estimate depends on the reliability of both the U.S. estimate and the mail survey data. The reliability of data from the mail survey alone cannot be assessed in terms of sampling error. Reliability depends in part upon State-to-State variations in the size and representativeness of the mailing list, as well as upon variations in rate, representativeness, and accuracy of returns.

3/ Each respondent reported for his own farm and for adjoining farms.

Table 4.--Annual averages of components of farm population change and rate of net migration for the United States, regions, and divisions, April 1965-68 1/

Area	Natural increase			Change through migration and reclassification of residence 2/					Annual rate of net migration 4/
					Between farms and nonfarm areas or the Armed Forces			Farm to farm 3/	
	Total	Births	Deaths	Net change	Net	To farms	From farms		
	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Thou.	Pct.
United States	74	184	-110	-711	-711	272	-983	0	-6.3
Regions: 5/									
Northeast	5	14	-9	-47	-48	21	-69	1	-5.7
North Central	27	70	-42	-238	-246	98	-344	7	-5.5
South	34	83	-49	-354	-341	117	-458	-13	-6.9
West	8	18	-10	-72	-76	37	-113	4	-6.7
Divisions: 5/									
New England	1	2	-2	-12	-12	4	-16	6/	-8.1
Middle Atlantic	4	12	-7	-35	-36	16	-52	1	-5.2
East North Central	12	33	-21	-105	-110	49	-159	5	-4.8
West North Central	15	36	-21	-133	-136	48	-184	3	-6.2
South Atlantic	15	35	-20	-118	-115	42	-157	-3	-5.7
East South Central	10	28	-18	-142	-131	38	-169	-11	-8.0
West South Central	8	19	-11	-94	-95	37	-132	1	-7.5
Mountain	5	9	-4	-33	-35	14	-49	2	-7.1
Pacific	4	9	-6	-39	-41	22	-63	3	-6.3

1/, 2/, and 3/ Same as table 2. 4/ Based on annual average net change in population through migration per 100 persons in the average April farm population for the period indicated. 5/ Similar estimates for States are not available. For States included in each region and division, see table 1. 6/ Less than 500 people.

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Earlier comparable reports.--Estimates for earlier years on number, migration, and natural increase of farm people were published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Farm Population Estimates for 1910-62, ERS-130, October 1963. Annual estimates from 1963 to date are available in separate ERS reports for each year as follows: 1963, ERS-177; 1964, ERS-233; 1965, ERS-286; 1966, ERS-344; and 1967, ERS-410.